

34
*The Church of GOD His peculiar Portion and
Inheritance, Opened and Improved:*

IN A

DISCOURSE

ON

Deuteronomy XXXII. 9.

The Substance of which was delivered at

SEVENOAKES, in *Kent*,

On October 14, 1764.

By MICHAEL BLIGH.

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SCOTTISH POETRY

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COLLECTED AND ARRANGED



BY HENRY VIVIAN

1870

EDINBURGH

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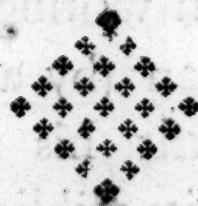
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1870

WHEN this discourse was delivered from the pulpit, the author had not the least thought of ever making it more public: it was purely the force of importunity and love, that engaged him to attempt to gather up the substance in writing; and with no further view than (by a single copy) to please and profit his nearest and best friends. As to its publication, it is done at the request of those that heard it from the pulpit; and as the LORD was pleased to bless it to the comfort and refreshment of several at that time, it is humbly hoped that by this means it may, through a divine blessing, not only convey further benefit to their souls, but be made useful to the souls of others also; and at the

same time, give a testimony to the world, and to the churches of CHRIST, of that which is the unfeigned faith, and constant doctrine, embraced and delivered by the author.





DEUTERONOMY XXXII. 9.

For the LORD's portion is his people : Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.

HIS chapter, of which my text is a part, contains things of the greatest importance ; both with respect to the honour of GOD, and the comfort, establishment, and salvation of his church and people. It is called in the last verse of the preceding chapter, *A Song* ; and why so? because it contains some of the greatest, and most memorable acts of GOD towards his church and people, under the former dispensation ; and how the same power, grace and love, are still engaged and employed for the protection, deliverance, and happiness of the church of GOD to the end of the world. Things worthy to be had in remembrance by the LORD's people ; written for their encouragement and comfort in dark and trying dispensations ; and which they should make mention of with thankfulness, and sing to the praise and honour of his great and holy name.

The

The chapter is introduced in the most solemn and magnificent manner :—*Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak ; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.* This form of speech, I apprehend, is used to set forth the dignity of the speaker, and the solemnity of the matter to be delivered ; to engage the attention of the persons concerned in it, and to leave them inexcusable if the things spoken of are utterly disregarded and rejected.

By the *heavens* here, we may perhaps understand the angels of heaven ; those glorious spirits that inhabit the pure regions above ; who attend to the voice of GOD, and are ready to execute his will and pleasure respecting his church and people here below : *Heb. i. 14. Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?* — And by the *earth*, the men or people on the earth, and particularly the church of CHRIST on earth, where this *doctrine drops as the rain, and distils as the dew, &c.* By *doctrine* here, we are not to understand the law of *Moses*, that was delivered on mount *Sinai* to the children of *Israel* ; but rather the doctrine of the gospel, or of the grace and love of GOD in CHRIST to his chosen people ; which *Moses* had a glimpse of, and which he preached to the children of *Israel* under types and figures ; and which did, through a divine blessing, drop as the rain into many of their hearts. But the words may perhaps be understood as a prophesy, and viewed as pointing

ing at the times of CHRIST and his apostles, when the gospel of God's grace should be published with more clearness, power, and success.

Now the gospel may be compared to rain, because, *1st*, Like the rain it comes from above, from heaven: it is not a device of men, but is from GOD. GOD is the author and giver of it; John xvii. 8. *For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me.* *2dly*, The rain falls by divine direction. So does the gospel! It is not sent to every nation, city, or place; but where the LORD is pleased to send it. And here we have to admire the riches of divine sovereignty and goodness to us the inhabitants of this sinful land, whom GOD hath long favoured with the enjoyment of the gospel! *3dly*, The gospel may be compared to rain, in regard to its effects. Like as the rain softens the earth when scorched with drought, so the gospel, when attended with a blessing from GOD, softens the hard and flinty hearts of men, and makes them humble and penitent before the LORD.

And further, after plentiful showers of rain, the earth is not only softened, but the fruits of it, the grass, corn, &c. put on a lively greenness and verdure: so the gospel enlivens, quickens, and revives the drooping spirits of God's children; it strengthens their faith, encourages their hope, and makes them run with delight and pleasure in the way of God's commandments.

Again,

Again, this doctrine is compared to *dew*, which falls in the night, falls in abundance, falls insensibly, and yet effectually revives and refreshes the fruits of the earth. So does the gospel; this falls in the night of darkness and desertion; falls in abundance on the LORD's inheritance, and effectually revives and comforts the hearts of the people of GOD.

In ver. 2. we have a reason rendered why this doctrine must be attended to; because, saith *Moses*, I will publish the name of the LORD: by which is intended, either, 1st, The attributes of the LORD, which are sometimes called his name, as *Prov. xviii. 10.* Or, 2dly, The gospel itself; which *Moses*, and all the ministers of the LORD do publish, and which is called his name, *Acts ix. 15.* Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me to bear my name, viz. my gospel, before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel. And then *Moses* calls on the LORD's people, saying, Ascribe ye greatness to our God, to the Lord JESUS CHRIST, who is God, and over all blessed for evermore, *Rom. ix. 5.* and who seems to be referred to ver. 4. He is the rock, &c. not only a rock, but the rock: the rock of ages, the rock of salvation, the antitype of that rock *Moses* smote in the wilderness; the rock which *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, and all the forefathers, built all their hopes of happiness upon; the rock which bore the church of GOD in the wilderness, and who, as the Almighty rock, saves to the uttermost all that come unto

God

God by him. Of this rock it is said, as follows. *All his ways are judgment, a GOD of truth, and without iniquity.* All which is true of CHRIST, as God-man and Mediator. *All his ways are judgment:* His ways in which he hath manifested his wisdom, power, grace, and love to men; as in creation, providence, and in the salvation of his chosen people. *A GOD of truth, and without iniquity:* CHRIST is this GOD of truth; he is the true GOD, and eternal life, 1 John v. 20. And he is without iniquity; for he did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. *Just and right is he:* Not only just in all his works among men, but the just One whom the Jews denied and crucified; and who will in a right way, manner, and time, justify all his people, and punish all his and his church's enemies.

It is said, verse 5. *They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of his children.* The enemies of CHRIST are here described; and though these words may be applied to every wicked and unregenerate man, yet the Jews, in the time of CHRIST, seem to be principally pointed at in them. These had corrupted themselves, the word and worship of God; and it might be justly said of many of them, the Scribes and Pharisees in particular, *their spot is not the spot of his children:* of the children of God, or of CHRIST. By spots here, we must understand spots of sin; and here we may observe, that the LORD's people have sinful spots as well as others: *for there is not a just man on earth that doeth good,*

and finneth not, Eccl. vii. 20. And yet there is a vast difference between the spots of God's children and the spots of others. God's people sin through weakness; others sin presumptuously. God's people repent of their sins, and turn from them; others are hardened by them, and continue in them. God's people hate their sins, and mourn over them; others take delight in them, and are well pleased with them. God's people fly to the blood of CHRIST, for cleansing from sin; others are ignorant of CHRIST, yea, enemies in their hearts against him.—Ver. 6. *Do ye thus requite the LORD, O foolish people, and unwise?* All wicked men are foolish and unwise. The Scribes and Pharisees, in the time of CHRIST, were so with a witness, who seem to be here spoken of, and whose sin is here aggravated. They not only perverted God's law, deceived the people, misused his servants, &c. but they rejected his son, put him to death, despised his righteousness, and set up their own in the room and stead of it, *Rom. x. 1, 2, &c.* Thus they requited the LORD for all his favours.—*Is he not thy Father? that hath made thee, preserved thee, and hitherto supplied all thy wants?*—Hath he not made thee, *and established thee as a nation?* made thee great and honourable, and established thy name in the earth. Yes, all this GOD did for the nation of the Jews, and may do such things as these for those that are enemies against him.—Ver. 7. *Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations.* Here the LORD, in order

order to aggravate the sin of the unbelieving *Jews*, and to encourage the faith of his own people, sends them back to former generations; saying, *Remember the days of old: viz.* The days and years that ran out before the incarnation of **CHRIST**. *Consider the years of many generations:* What wonders **GOD** hath wrought for the children of *Israel*, and especially for such as have loved and feared his holy name, *Ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee:* Their father *Abraham*, whom the Scribes and Pharisees claimed a relation to, and in which they gloried; and whom they might ask concerning these things, by consulting the writings of *Moses* and the prophets; which give an account of him as the father of the faithful; how he trusted in and obeyed the **LORD**; also, what wonders **GOD** wrought for him and his seed; for *Isaac*, for *Jacob*, for his posterity, and for all that were heirs with them of the same promises.

— Ver. 8. *When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance: what part, lot, and portion every one should enjoy in the earth.—When he separated the sons of Adam:* the Elect from the Non-Elect, which he did in his eternal purpose and decree, and gave to the one a greater, and to the other a lesser part and portion. Or in a providential way, dividing to the posterity of *Adam* their portion, and place of abode in the earth.—*He set the bounds of the people, according to the number of the children of Israel.* **GOD**, in his all-wise counsel and providence, provided the

land of *Canaan*, a land flowing with milk and honey, for *Jacob's* literal seed: so the heavenly inheritance, the blessings of grace and glory, which were typified by the land of *Canaan*, are given to, reserved for, and shall, in God's own time, be bestowed upon his spiritual seed, called *the election of grace*, Rom. xi. 5.—Thus are we at length come to the words first read, and which contain the cause and reason of God's doing all those great things we have been considering in the context;

For the LORD's portion is his people, Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.

In the words we have,
 1st, The LORD's portion discovered;—*his people.*
 2^{dly}, Their descriptive character given; *Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.*

In opening and improving the subject, I shall, as enabled of the LORD, consider,

- I. Who the LORD's people are, that are here called *his portion*.
- II. What their being his portion intends and includes.
- III. What a portion these are to the LORD; and that both on his account, and on theirs.

I. I am

I. I am to consider who the **LORD**'s people are, that are here called *his portion*.—Indeed the whole earth is the **LORD**'s, with the cattle on a thousand hills, as the *Psalmist* faith, *Psf. l. 10, 12*. And yet amongst all these, **God** claims but his lot and portion, according to the tenor of the covenant of grace, *Rom. ix. 27*. *Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant only shall be saved.* And *Ch. xi. 5*. *Even so then at this present time also, there is a remnant according to the election of grace.* These are the **LORD**'s portion, and these shall be his in the day when he makes up his jewels. But I intend a more particular description of the **LORD**'s people and portion. And,

1st, They are those whom he hath set apart in his eternal purpose, for himself, for his own peculiar use and glory. As in *Psal. iv. 3*. *But know, says the Psalmist, that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly for himself.* Not that we are to suppose (as some do) that **God**, by his fore-knowledge, saw from eternity who would be holy in time; and for the sake of this their holiness chose them to be his people; no, such a sense of the text, would not only contradict the tenor of scripture, but entirely destroy the free grace of **God** in the salvation of sinners, and lay the whole stress of their happiness on the footing of their own works. **God**'s setting apart his people, in his eternal purpose, decree, &c. is the cause, ground, and foundation of their holiness; and their holiness is the fruit and effect of it.

Eph.

Eph. i. 4. According as he hath chosen us in him, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love. Now this act of God the Father, in setting apart his people for himself, is called his *eternal purpose*, Eph. iii. 11. And hence it is that the heirs of happiness, are said to be *predestinated to the adoption of children, according to the good pleasure of his will*, Eph. i. 5. So that this privilege arises, not from the will and goodness of man in time, but from the sovereign will and pleasure of God in eternity.

2dly, The LORD's people, which in our text he calleth his portion, are those he gave in covenant-charge to CHRIST. I have manifested thy name (says CHRIST) to the men which thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them me. They were the LORD's in the sense before mentioned; and as such he gave them to CHRIST in the covenant of grace, that by him they might be brought safe to glory.

3dly, The LORD's people, are those that were redeemed by CHRIST: Redeemed by the precious blood of the Son of God. Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as with silver and gold, from your vain conversation; but with the precious blood of JESUS CHRIST, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot, 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. Now to shew the dignity of the person of CHRIST, and the worth and value of his blood, as the meritorious cause and price of our redemption, it is called the *blood of GOD*, Acts xx. 28. *Feed the church of GOD, which he hath purchased with his*

his own blood. Hence it is, that this blood becomes efficacious for the purging away of sin ; and is effectual for the redemption and salvation of all, and every one for whom it was shed. Not one soul can ever be lost, or perish eternally, for whom CHRIST died. See *Rom.* viii. 33, 34, &c. It not only reflects the greatest dishonour upon GOD in the contrivance of our salvation by CHRIST crucified, to assert, that CHRIST shed his blood for all men, for every individual ; and that the greatest part of mankind will, notwithstanding all that CHRIST has done for them, perish eternally. This, I say, not only reflects on the wisdom, love, and power of the Almighty, but is even blasphemy. God's people are redeemed by price and power, from the curse of the law, and from a vain conversation (*Gal.* iii. 13. *1 Pet.* i. 18.) How inconsistent then, and trifling is it, to glory in CHRIST's dying for all men, whilst the devil runs away with the greatest part of the purchase of his blood ? and how weak is it to talk of all men being redeemed by CHRIST, while the greatest part of them are in bondage to sin and Satan ? But, blessed be GOD, we have not so learned CHRIST.

4thly, The LORD's people, who are here called his portion, are those who are in time called by his special grace, justified by the righteousness of CHRIST through believing, sanctified by the Divine Spirit, and brought to the obedience of faith, *Rom.* viii. 29, 30. *For whom he did fore-
know, he also did predestinate ; to be conformed to the
image*

image of his son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did pre-destinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified. I am obliged, you see, to put many things together for brevity-sake. However, I do affirm, that these, and these only, are the LORD's people and portion. And here you see, that the doctrines of grace are no licentious doctrines: they lay a foundation for holiness, and effectually produce it. Whatever was done for the church of God in eternity, was done with a design to make it holy here, as well as happy hereafter. Eph. v. 25, 26, 27. *Husbands, love your wives, as CHRIST loved the church and gave himself for it: that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish.* Here is no argument, you see, from hence to encourage sin and wickedness; no, quite the reverse; and indeed *without holiness no man shall see the LORD,* Heb. xii. 14. I proceed,

II. To consider, what the LORD's people being called his portion, intends and includes. And I apprehend it includes,

1st, God's early love to his people. God's love to his church and people is not of yesterday; it is of antient date, it commenced in eternity.

nity. Hence says the prophet *Jeremiah*, ch. xxxi. 3. personating the church of GOD ; *The LORD hath appeared unto me of old, saying, I have loved thee with an everlasting love ; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee.* This early love of GOD to his people, is the source, spring, and foundation of all their happiness, both in time and to all eternity. And as it is eternal, so it is also immutable ; it is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever. Indeed, unregenerate and ignorant men, are apt to think and conclude, that their love and obedience to GOD are the ground and cause of GOD's loving them : sometimes you shall hear them acknowledge, That they indeed do not love and serve GOD as they ought at present, yet they think (when in a good mood) that they can and will do it ; and then conclude, that when they begin to love and serve GOD, GOD will begin to love them ; and so make the creature's love the cause of GOD's loving the creature. But indeed, my brethren, GOD is always beforehand with his people : if we love GOD, it is *because he first loved us.* See *1 John* iv. 9, 10, and 19th verses.

2dly, It includes that delight, complacency, and satisfaction, that GOD takes in his church and people. GOD will have his church called by the delightful name of *Hephzi-bah* (*Isa. Ixii. 4.*) And why so ? to let us know that his delight is in her. *For the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married.* CHRIST delighted in the prospect and view of his church and people

ple from everlasting. *Prov. viii. 31.*—rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth, and my delights were with the sons of men. So in the prophecy of Zephaniah, ch. iii. ver. 17. *The LORD thy GOD in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love; he will joy over thee with singing.* Now you know, that a loving bridegroom delights to have his beloved bride in view; her countenance, her words, her gestures, yea, all her deportment and behaviour afford delight, joy, and satisfaction to his heart. Thus it is between CHRIST and his church. He takes an infinite and an eternal delight in the church, as his bride and spouse. Hence those endearing expressions to her. *Canticles ii. 14. Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.*

3dly, God's people being called his portion, shews his right and propriety in them. *Ye are not your own, says the apostle, ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify GOD with your bodies, and with your spirits, which are his.* The persons, gifts, graces, substance, and all that the saints enjoy, are the LORD's, and are at his disposal. (1.) Their persons are his, as the objects of his special love, and the subjects of his delight and care. O! what delight and comfort does this at times afford to a child of GOD? (2.) Their gifts are his: whatever gifts of a spiritual nature any of us enjoy, they all come from GOD, as St. James saith; *ch. i. 17. and they are to be used*

used, not to exalt the creature, but to glorify GOD, and edify his church and people, *Eph. iv. 11, 12, 13.* (3.) Their graces are also his : their faith, hope, love, joy, humility, &c. and all these do, in the exercise of them, tend to glorify the name of the LORD. (4.) Their substance also ; this is the LORD's : and one great end and design of the LORD in bestowing earthly substance on any of his children, is, that they may be thereby the better enabled to support his cause and interest in the world, and to do good to his poor saints. Therefore, says St. Paul to *Timothy*, (1 *Ep. vi. 17, 18.*) *Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living GOD, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy : that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, &c.* Riches carry a temptation in them to pride and sensuality ; therefore the LORD's people that are possessed of them, should view these things as the gifts of GOD, and themselves as only stewards of these blessings ; watching against pride, walking in humility with their poor brethren, and endeavouring after extensive usefulness in the church of CHRIST.

4thly, Their being termed God's inheritance, includes the vast expence, cost, and labour he has been at, in order to manure, cultivate, and enrich this his portion and inheritance. GOD is sometimes in scripture called an *husbandman*, and his church is called his *husbandry*, *John xv.*

1, 2. *I am the true vine, (says CHRIST) and my father is the husbandman: every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh it away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.* There is a twofold being in CHRIST; the one by outward profession only, the other by divine implantation; the one have only a name and place in God's house, the other bring forth fruit to the honour and glory of GOD: and this comes to pass, not because they are better in themselves than others; no, but because the Great Husbandman of the church purgeth them, that they may bring forth more fruit. Of the former, it is said, *he taketh them away, viz.* The LORD doth this; either by suffering them to apostatize from the truth, and to fall into such errors in principle, as that they are dissatisfied with, and in time rend themselves from the church of CHRIST: or, he permits them to fall into gross and scandalous sins, &c. for which they are justly cut off from the communion of the church. Moreover, God's people are called his *husbandry*, 1 Cor. iii. 9. *For we are labourers together with GOD: ye are GOD's husbandry, ye are GOD's building.* Now as the husbandman lays out much cost and labour on his farm, in order to enrich it, especially if it be his own inheritance; so doth the LORD lay out much cost and labour on his church and people. It hath cost him, 1st, much care; 2dly, much expence; 3dly, much labour.

14. The church hath cost the **LORD** much care. Hence, says the apostle, *1 Pet. v. 7. Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you.* **GOD** takes care of the bodies of his people: he not only upholds them in life, but he takes care of them: not so much as an hair can fall from their heads without his notice and permission. He watches over them, feeds them, clothes them, comforts them, and supplies all their wants from day to day. No disorder can touch their outward man, but by a grant from their **GOD**. And when afflictions come to his saints, it is by his leave, and with a gracious design to do them good. Indeed chastisements are not joyous, but they are profitable; they bring forth *the peaceable fruits of righteousness* in them that are *exercised thereby*, *Heb. xii. 11.* Again, The **LORD** takes care of the souls of his people, of their better part: this he evidences, by giving in Divine supports in a time of distress and darkness; by enabling to resist temptations; by restraining the power of indwelling sin; by strengthening the graces of his own Spirit, and by renewing the manifestations of his love to the believer's heart. *Did not our hearts burn within us, whilst he talked with us by the way?* *Luke xxiv. 32.* And further, the **LORD** takes care of the substance of his children likewise: this, the very Devil himself is constrained to acknowledge, *Job i. 10. Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?* This hedge of omnipotent power,

the

the stakes of which are everlasting and unchangeable love ; this hedge is so high, and so strong, that none of the church's enemies can break through or climb over, until the **LORD** gives permission. The Devil could not touch *Job*, nor any thing that he had, until the **LORD** gave him leave to do it. O what encouragement arises from hence, to venture our all in the hand of our **GOD** at all times, and especially when we go out to engage in his work and service ! But this care of **GOD** over his people will appear still more wonderful, if we consider it as employed about them before their conversion. **GOD** not only takes care of his people after they are called, but also before. Indeed his common care, in the exercise of providence, is extended to all his creatures ; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and he sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. But there is a special care exercised over **GOD**'s chosen, even before their conversion, *2 Tim. i. 9.* *Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling ; not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in CHRIST JESUS before the world began.* Here you see is a saving that goes before calling grace is bestowed ; and I think, whatever may be included in it, that care, which **GOD** exercises over his people before conversion, is evidently intended. The apostle *Jude* also dedicates his epistle, *To them that were preserved in JESUS CHRIST, and called.* Now this care of **GOD** is engaged to preserve the natural

natural lives of his chosen before calling grace is bestowed. And the lives of many, even in this state, have been miraculously preserved. And though the Devil hath sometimes thrown them into the water, and into the fire to destroy them, as he did the young man that was brought to CHRIST, *Mark ix. 20, &c.* yet nothing could put an end to their natural lives, until they were possessed of a spiritual one; until they were possessed of divine grace, and habitually prepared for death and glory. May this consideration calm the minds of those Christians, whose hearts are often filled with distressing fears, on account of their poor unconverted children and relations.

Moreover, God's care is exercised over his children after conversion; they are then no more able to preserve themselves than they were before. Indeed, they are then more exposed to the malice of Satan and the world than ever: The Devil would soon destroy the work of God in them; and the world and their own lusts would soon overcome them, were they not preserved by an omnipotent hand. God maintains his own work in the hearts of his children; and they, in spite of all their enemies, are *kept by the power of GOD, through faith, unto salvation,* *1 Pet. i. 5.* And not only much care has been laid out upon the church of God, but,

2dly, Much expence too. Infinite sums of wisdom, grace, and love, have been laid out upon the church of God, in order to make it rich

rich and fruitful. *Eph. iii. 8, 9, 10.* Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of CHRIST: and to make all men see, what is the fellowship of the mystery, which, from the beginning of the world hath been hid in GOD, who created all things by JESUS CHRIST; to the intent, that now, unto the principalities and powers, in heavenly places, might be made known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of GOD. Not only all the perfections of GOD have been laid out upon his church and people, but it hath cost him the infinite price of his Son's blood. Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as with silver and gold, from your vain conversation, but with the precious blood of CHRIST, *1 Pet. i. 18.* But,

3dly, Much labour has been exercised on the church also. Read at your leisure *Isa. v.* the first part of that chapter. Now GOD may be said to labour in his church, his spiritual husbandry,

By his { Word,
Ministers,
Ordinances,
Providences, and
Spirit.

1st, By his word. I mean the Holy Scriptures. These were given by the inspiration of GOD, and are profitable to the church of GOD; profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, that the man of GOD

GOD may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works, 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. *GOD speaks to, and labours in his church by the Holy Scriptures;* and from hence the Divine Spirit generally fetches something, and applies it to the heart of a sinner, whereby the good work is begun, and by further applications of the word, it is carried on and perfected in the saints of *GOD.* 2dly, *By his ministers.* As *GOD* does not in an ordinary way work without his ministers, so ministers can do nothing for *GOD*, unless he works with and by them. When *GOD* sent *Moses* to labour amongst his people in *Egypt*, he, sensible of his own weakness, and the important nature of the work he was called to, pleads with *GOD* to be excused; as well he might, while looking to himself; but when *GOD* says, *Go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say,* this removes all his objections; he readily encounters with the difficulties in the way, enters on the important work; nor do I find he ever declined it afterwards. He well knew, that if *GOD* taught him, and worked with him, the work would go on and prosper. So says *Paul*, *I can do all things through CHRIST strengthening me*, Phil. iv. 13. 3dly, *GOD* works by his ordinances. All the ordinances of *GOD*'s house should be attended to by his people; and if you ask, why? I answer, because *GOD* works in, with, and by them, for the growth, comfort, edification, establishment, and happiness of his children. Indeed, ordinances can do us

no good, unless the GOD of ordinances meet us in them: but O ! what loss do those sustain who despise, overlook, or neglect gospel-ordinances? Surely those who thus wait on the LORD, are in the way to renew their spiritual strength, *Isa.* xl. 30, 31. GOD has promised to meet those that remember him in these ways. *Isa.* lxiv. 5. 4thly, GOD works also by his providences. The providences of GOD, as well as his counsels, are a great deep. We are often ready to stagger in regard to them, as the *Psal-mist* did, and too often we lose sight of GOD in them: but GOD is never at a loss in them; though he often works secretly and invisibly with regard to us, yet always effectually after the counsel of his own most wise and holy will, and with a gracious design towards his church and people: so that the apostle affirms, without the least hesitation, *All things work together for good to them that love GOD*, Rom. viii. 28. 5thly, GOD works by his Spirit. Or rather, GOD the Spirit himself works in, and by all those things before mentioned. Alas ! what is the word of GOD? what are ministers, ordinances, or providences, unless the Spirit of GOD be there? *Paul* may plant, and *Apollos* may water, but all will be ineffectual to the church and people of GOD, unless the Divine Spirit bless the means and instruments used, and give increase.

I proceed now to the last thing mentioned in the method, and which I shall treat in as brief a manner as possible, which was to observe,

3dly,

3dly, What a portion the **LORD's** people are, and that both with respect to themselves, and with respect to him. With respect to themselves, they are,

1st, A very poor and beggarly portion. They are by nature destitute of every thing that is really good and excellent. They have no spiritual wisdom, no spiritual strength; they have nothing, nor can they do any thing for **God** in a spiritual and acceptable manner. To speak the whole truth, they have no desire to do any thing for **God**, nor to receive any spiritual blessings from him. As they are enemies against him in their mind, by wicked works, so their language to him is, *Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? And what profit shall we have, if we pray unto him?* Job xxi. 14, 15. And though we are all by nature in this sad case, in this poor beggarly condition, yet such is our pride and ignorance, we should willingly live and die in this miserable condition, did not the **LORD** deliver us out of it by his rich sovereign grace, *Eph. ii. 8, 9, 10.*

2dly, A mean and worthless portion. If we consider them as they are by nature, they are very mean and worthless; they are mere cum-bur-grounds on the earth. We have seen that they have nothing, and that they can do nothing that is well pleasing and acceptable to **God**: for *whatsoever is not of faith, is sin*; and this they are utterly destitute of in their natural state. And

as to their own works, they are no better than *filthy rags*, Isa. lxiv. 6. Phil. iii. 8.

3dly, They are a very troublesome and rebellious portion. As it was with *Israel* after the flesh, so it is with *Israel* after the spirit. O how much trouble (if I may be allowed the expression) had the *LORD* with the children of *Israel* in their journey from *Egypt* to *Canaan*? It was so great, that the *LORD* declares in this chapter, wherein our text is, that he would *make the remembrance of them to cease from among men*, were it not that he feared the wrath of the enemy; and lest their adversaries should say, *Our hand is high, and the LORD hath not done all this*, 26, and 27 verses. And are we better than they? no, in no wise. We are as discontented, as stubborn, and rebellious as they were. 1st, We are as discontented: if the *LORD* does not indulge us with every thing our foolish fancies run after, how apt are we, like *Israel* of old, to open our mouths in a way of murmuring against the *LORD*? and if we do not directly lay the fault on *God*, yet, like them, we quarrel with his servants, instruments and providences, and so in effect quarrel with *God* himself. O! how far are we, for the most part, from saying with good old *Eli*, *It is the LORD, let him do what seemeth him good*, 1 Sam. iii. 18. Or with submissive *Job*, *The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the LORD*. And are we not as stubborn and rebellious as they were? they were stiff-necked, and uncircumcised

cumcised in heart and ears ; and are not we too much like them in this ? O ! how hard do we find it to deny our own wills, and in every thing to say with our blessed Master, *Father, not my will, but thine be done.*

4thly, They are an unprofitable portion. CHRIST hath taught us this lesson, that when we have done all, to say, *We are unprofitable servants*, Luke xvii. 10. Eliphaz puts the question, Job xxii. 2, 3. *Can a man be profitable to GOD, as he that is wise may be profitable to himself?* By no means. The interrogation carries in it a strong negation. GOD is infinitely and perfectly happy in his own blessed self : he was so from all eternity, and would have remained so, had all his creatures been brought to utter dissolution. Indeed the grace of GOD may be illustrated, and his manifestative glory shine the brighter, through the faith, obedience, and sufferings of his people, John xv. 8. 1 Cor. vi. 20. But his essential glory can receive no addition by any thing that is done, or can be done by any of his creatures. In this respect, he is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever. Thus you see that the LORD's people, in respect to themselves, are a poor and beggarly portion, a mean and worthless portion, a troublesome and rebellious portion, and a fruitless and unprofitable one. And yet, in respect to the LORD, they are,

1st, A rich and beautiful portion. They are possessed of durable riches and righteousness.

The

The king's daughter is all glorious within ; her cloathing is of wrought gold, Psal. xlv. 13. The church's relation to GOD, and as a consequence of it, her riches, honour, and grandeur, are here set forth. And we are told by an inspired apostle, that, *GOD hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of a kingdom, James ii. 5.* And of the church's beauty you read, *Ps. xlvi.ii.*

2. Beautiful for salvation, the joy of the whole earth is mount Zion, the city of the great King. Now the church's beauty lies in her being cloathed in the compleat righteousness of CHRIST, and being adorned with the graces of his Spirit ; and in this respect she is a none-such, a perfect beauty ; as you have it in *Ezek. xvi. 14.* *And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty, for it was PERFECT through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the LORD GOD.* So *Canticles iv. 7.* *Thou art all fair, my love ; there is no spot in thee.* Now, if you ask, how the church comes by all this riches, beauty, &c. You are told *2 Cor. viii. 9.* *For ye know the grace of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, though he was rich, yet, for your sakes, he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.*

2dly, The saints are to the LORD a precious and delightful portion. Hence he calls his church *Hephzi-bah* ; the LORD delighteth in her. The LORD taketh pleasure in his saints ; he will beautify the meek with salvation. Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints. —

Now

Now the LORD's people are precious in his sight,

In regard to their { Persons,
Graces, and
Works.

1st, Their persons are precious, as the objects of his everlasting love; as they are cloathed with his Son's righteousness; and as they are adorned with the graces of his holy Spirit. 2^{dly}, Their graces are precious. Their faith, hope, love, humility, sincerity, &c. However low and diminutive the thoughts of a believer in CHRIST may be respecting himself, and the graces he is possessed of, yet, it is evident the LORD prizes them at a very high rate. 2 Pet. i. 1. *To them that have obtained like PRECIOUS FAITH with us.* So 1 Pet. i. 6, 7. *If need be ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold which perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearance of JESUS CHRIST.* But *to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.* 3^{dly}, Their works are also precious. These, as they are the fruits of faith, evidences of love, done by the assistance of GOD's Spirit, in the name of CHRIST, and with a single eye to his glory; though much weakness and imperfection attend them, yet are they very precious to and acceptable in the sight of the LORD. The least and meanest

meanest work done in this way and manner to CHRIST, and for CHRIST, shall never fail of receiving a reward, *Psal. xix. 11. Matthew x. 41, 42.*

3dly, As they are a precious portion, so they are a portion that the LORD will not part with upon any terms. *Naboth*, you know, would not part with his vineyard to king *Ahab*, though he offered him a better vineyard for it, or to give him the worth of it in money : and why would he not part with it ? because it was his father's inheritance, *1 Kings xxi. 1, 2, 3.* Just so it is in respect to CHRIST and his people ; he will not part with one of them, because they are his father's inheritance. *Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat ; but, says CHRIST, I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not*, *Luke xxii. 31.* And in another place, *faith he, I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand*, *John x. 28.* Thus you see CHRIST will not part with his people upon any terms whatever, for he *hates putting away*, *Mal. ii. 16.*

Lastly, The LORD's people are in respect to him an happy portion. They are happy, as they are enclosed in the arms of everlasting love ; as having the free and full pardon of all their sins ; as they have a right to all the blessings of the covenant of grace ; as being heirs of all Divine promises, and of eternal life. They are happy in life, happy at death ; yea, they will be inexpressibly, inconceivably happy for ever and

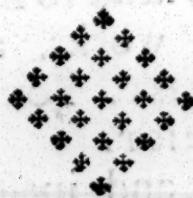
and ever : " for eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love him". Thus have I gone through the doctrinal part, and shall now close with two or three remarks on the whole.—And are the **LORD**'s people his portion, and the lot of his inheritance ? Then I infer hence,

1st, What an happiness it is to be possessed of real grace ! It is this only can evidence our relation to **God**, and our title to glory. What will all those great things we have been speaking of avail any one of us, unless we have some good ground to hope that we are the *called* of **God** according to his purpose ? O ! let us examine our state and condition faithfully : It is a matter of the greatest importance. If any of you should live and die without real grace, you are undone to all eternity ! " But I would hope better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though I thus speak", yet remember this ; if **CHRIST** be in you, the body is dead ; the old man has received a mortal wound ; you are dead to sin, dead to the law, as a covenant of works, and alive to **God** through **JESUS CHRIST**. You live upon **CHRIST**, and you live to **CHRIST**.

2dly, How vain and ineffectual are all attempts that are made against the church and people of **God** ? All the powers of earth and hell combined together, can never destroy the least believer in **JESUS CHRIST**. Satan may

roar, and the world may frown and threaten, but they can never devour one of the least or weakest lambs of CHRIST's flock. The church of CHRIST is built on such an impregnable rock, that the gates of hell can never prevail against it.

3dly, To conclude: How safely may the believer in CHRIST rest himself, and all his concerns, in the hand of the LORD? the great and good shepherd will indeed take care of all the sheep. Are you tempted? are you distressed? are you persecuted for righteousness-sake? yet fear not, you are the LORD's portion; he will not part with you, nor suffer Satan to devour you, but will bruise him under your feet shortly. Remember, he is now praying for you; "Father, I will that those thou hast given to me, be with me where I am: therefore, I say, Fear not: JESUS will strengthen you; he will help you: yea, he will uphold you with the right hand of his righteousness.



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An

A N H Y M N.

FIRM as the earth thy gospel stands,
 My L ORD, my hope, my truſt :
 If I am found in JESU's hands,
 My ſoul can ne'er be loſt.

His honour is engag'd to ſave,
 The meanest of his ſheep ;
 All that his heavenly Father gave,
 His hands ſecurely keep.

Nor death, nor hell ſhall e'er remove
 His fav'rites from his breast ;
 In the dear bosom of his love
 They muſt for ever reſt.

WATTS.

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